

Continental Divide Research and Learning Center

The new Center at Rocky Mountain National Park (RMNP) had four goals for 2001:

- 1) increase management related research within the park and network;*
- 2) improve the science information about the park reaching the general public;*
- 3) increase the amount of matching dollars supporting RMNP research;*
- 4) develop a research volunteer program. All four of these goals were achieved and programs are now in place to accomplish even more in fiscal year 2002.*

Matching Dollars Increase Dramatically

During the Learning Center's first year, matching dollars and in-kind contributions for the Rocky Mountain National Park research program soared from ~\$100,000 to ~\$800,000. About \$550,000 was contributed by the Learning Center's partners. An additional \$800,000 was raised to support renovation of the historic McGraw Ranch. The Ranch will provide accommodations for researchers and research volunteers when it opens in 2003.

New Volunteers Recruited through Learning Center

An advertisement in a local newspaper was used to recruit Field Research Assistants for help with an inventory and



Volunteers gathered information on amphibian health.

health study of park amphibians. The ad brought in a dozen new volunteers who enthusiastically looked for frogs and frog eggs in remote streams and lakes. Volunteers also assisted with the first comprehensive survey of glaciers in the park, helped radio tag beaver, and kept an eye on a backcountry study of lake acidification. Volunteers experienced first-hand the ups and downs, literally, of working on field projects in Rocky Mountain's steep terrain. The park benefited from their donated time and from increased community understanding of science-based management. Plans to expand the use of volunteers on research projects in 2002 have been made.

Rocky Research and Resources Day

A one-day mini-science conference was held to educate local residents about issues within Rocky Mountain National Park. Sixty people from surrounding communities attended as researchers reviewed their projects and results.

School Programs Provide Real Life Experience

Two programs initiated through the Learning Center helped students develop a real-life understanding of the scientific method:

■ Sixty high school students participated in a field trip with a researcher who studies the geochemistry of high elevation watersheds.

■ Two high school students enrolled in a National Science Foundation enrichment program were hired as research assistants.



Students studied plant and animal diversity in park meadows.

Historic Archives Protection

Seventeen graduate students from a library science program sorted, cleaned, and annotated historic records as a part of their coursework in a weeklong archives practicum. They were also able to create a database detailing the contents of historic photo albums and repair several rare books. This same course will return to Rocky Mountain next year as well as send a team to Grand Teton National Park.



The Learning Center sponsored a survey of RMNP's glaciers.